**“That all citizens will be given an equal start through a sound education is one of the most basic promised rights of our democracy. Our chronic refusal as a nation to guarantee that right for all children…. Is rooted in a kind of moral blindness, or at least a failure of moral imagination….It is a failure which threatens our future as a nation of citizens called to a common purpose…. Tied to one another by a common bond”**

**Senator Paul Wellstone- March 31, 2000**

**PROJECT** **OVERVIEW**

**State takeover of Chronically Failing Schools**

**All over the country we have schools who consistently have low test scores, low graduation rates and appear to be unable to break the cycle of failure. The No Child Left Behind law of 2002 classifies 3500 schools- around 4 per cent of the nation’s schools- are classified as chronically low performing. 12 per cent of the nation’s high schools are considered “drop out factories”, where only 50 per cent of students or less graduate. The Students in these communities’ opportunities for success in life, or their chances to achieve their goals may be severely hampered by the state of their neighborhood schools. The percentage of K-12 public Schools in America with students who are poor and are mostly black and Hispanic are growing. The general accountability office found that from 2000 to 2014 the schools of this type grew from 9 to 16 percent(GAO 2016). These schools tend to have fewer stem and college prep classes, and a higher percent of students who are suspended or expelled. America is known for the ability of its people to do better than their parents did in both education and income. The ability to overcome the circumstances you are born in and achieve your dreams is the hallmark of the American dream**

**The chronic failure of these schools as defined by NCLB may be contributing to the new trend of fixed economic inequality (Putnam 2015). America is fast becoming a country where you are trapped in the economic grouping in which you are born in (Putnam 2015). The lack of a good or great education is possibly reducing the economic mobility of a section of our society. We are becoming more and more a society of fixed economic classes.**

**How can we help reverse this trend, or how can we turn chronically failing schools around, so they can help Americans overcome the circumstances they are born in? There has been 3 distinct trends to counteract and turn this trend/ issue of chronically failing schools:**

1. **American’s are increasingly turning to charter schools, and are abandoning the public school system all together.**
2. **American’s are turning to private schools**
3. **States are intervening in the local systems, by taking over sections of the system and running those systems themselves or turning over the systems to private schools( through vouchers) and charter school systems.**

**Each State is defining chronically failing schools for itself, but they all have a few commonalities which are**

1. **Low graduation rates**
2. **Low test scores**
3. **Attendance issues**
4. **Inability to make adequate progress over 3 to 5 years or more**
5. **Financial mismanagement**
6. **Teacher turnover**
7. **Low teacher skill set in years of experience and certification**
8. **Number of AP classes**

**The states then set up some sort of scoring system containing these items and others and then rank all of the schools based on these scores. The schools that score consistently in the bottom 10 percent are eligible to be taken over by the state. Under the no child left behind act, Schools that receive Title I funds and do not make adequate yearly progress (meet achievement targets) over 5 years face state intervention or some sort of restructuring of the schools.**

**Trend or Issue**

**Is this a trend or an issue? Chronically failing schools are an issue. Entire neighborhoods are determined by the status of the schools. Parents who are economically able, tend to locate to neighborhoods where the schools are successful, leaving the poor to not only all live in the same neighborhood, but attend the same schools. This is a real issue for American schools, where the trend is for schools to become segregated both racially and economically. The response to this phenomena now is more and more to intervene from the outside. This action of no longer leaving it to the school or the school system is a growing trend. Stakeholders have lost confidence or are losing confidence in the ability of these schools to turn themselves around and the trend is now to intervene from the outside.**

**The state takeover consist of the following types;**

1. **Reopen the school as a charter school**
2. **Replace the staff of the existing school**
3. **Contract with a private entity to run the school**
4. **Turn over the school system to a state agency, which brings in state personnel to assist in running the system, usually taking over all financial matters of the system, and**
5. **The most recent trend is creating entire school districts of chronically failing schools and taking there governance away from the public schools. These schools are given over to charter or for profit school management. The school board and superintendent are chosen by the state and are separated from the public school system**

**When the state takes over the school system they take several steps in common:**

1. **They take over the finances of the system and determine the spending or procurement procedures**
2. **Fire the teachers and make them re- apply for their positons**
3. **Hire the principal or superintendent of the school or system**
4. **Allow the principal or superintendent to alter the curriculum**
5. **Let the principal select teachers for the school**
6. **Let the principal determine the pay scale and the contract requirements**
7. **Let the Principal or Superintendent determine the length of the school day**
8. **Let the Principal determine the admission requirements, and the attendance requirements for the school**
9. **Replace or limit the power of the school board**

**The best known of these state takeovers is the Louisiana Recovery School District which took over the New Orleans School district and turned it into a completely Charter school District, after hurricane Katrina in 2003. The district also includes schools in Shreveport and Baton Rouge.**

**Tennessee also has an opportunity school district which is over seen by its public school superintendent. These schools are charter schools, ran by independent management groups. Tennessee also has an Achievement School District (ASD) which has grown from 6 schools in 2012 to 29 schools in 2015. The 5 Schools operated by ASD are given charter like autonomy and are led by state appointed leaders. The remaining schools are operated by charter operators hired by the ASD.**

**Michigan set up the Education Achievement Authority (EAA) and in 2012 took over 15 of Detroit’s lowest performing schools. Presently 3 of these schools are ran by charter schools selected by EAA and the EAA is looking for charter to run the other 12 schools.**

**Eleven states have passed or are considering legislation to create state run districts in the past year. Many states have intervened in the school systems since 2010, including Arkansas which took over the failing schools in Little Rock, Arkansas. In 2015 Governor Kasich of Ohio took over the schools of Youngstown Ohio last July. North Carolina legislature is looking to establish a school recovery district.**

**Georgia lawmakers passed legislation to create an Opportunity School District which will be run by the state. They have already selected which schools would be eligible for take over and have published a list of the schools. This plan will go the voters for approval on the November ballot.**

**Atlanta Public Schools which has the most schools on the state created list has decide to establish its own opportunity school district. They are selecting charter operators to run some of the chronically failing schools in its district next year, and plan to place more under charter school management over the next 3 years.**

**In addition to passing legislation to set up Recovery School Districts, many states have taken over systems by placing them into receivership. Alabama, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York and Massachusetts are a few of the states who have used this method.**

**State takeover of schools is a trend, and the results achieved have been mixed at best. Best practices are being developed on how to do it, what works and what doesn’t work is still being determined.**